OUR FAITH

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Purpose:--"To diffuse the knowledge and promote the interests of pure religion, which, in accordance with the teachings of Jesus, is summed up in love to God and love to man."

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Prayer

God of all power and might! Thy secret place shall be our shelter still. On one thing our heart is fixed, that we will put our trust in Thee, though terrors also are around Thee. Thou hangest the world upon nothing: yet we dwell thereon in peace. Thou barest Thine arm in the lightning: yet we work in the fields which Thou smitest, and own it as the messenger of Thy perfect will. Darkness and tempest are often round Thee; yet we expect Thy light behind every cloud. In every sorrow which awaits us, may we look up without despair. If we are driven by strong trouble, as a bird before the storm, may we find shelter in Thee, as in the clefts of the everlasting Rock which the tempests cannot shake. Amen.

Joint Editorial

The Greeley-Swanson Amendments

Next May the Annual Meeting of the American Unitarian Association will have to vote upon a proposed amendment to the By-Laws which has been filed by Rev. Dana M. Greeley. This amendment would add to the fifth paragraph of Article I the clause, "individual freedom of belief is an inherent part of the Unitarian way of life." And the Annual Meeting will also have to consider an amendment to Mr. Greeley's amendment which has been filed by Rev. Harvey Swanson.

Since nothing can now stop this proposal coming before the Annual Meeting, we have to clarify our minds on the issue. A minor objection to the proposed new clause might be made because of the way it uses the word "Unitarian." We all have a general notion of what is meant by speaking of, say, the "Christian" way of life, or the "democratic" way of life. But what can be meant by the "Unitarian" way of life? It obviously does not mean "non-Trinitarian." Nor, indeed, does the word seem to be used in any meaning given to it in any dictionary. Apparently it simply means "true." Perhaps "the **true** way of life" would have expressed the thought better. However, a Unitarian audience may not be unresponsive to a rhetoric that equates the Unitarian with the true.

Mr. Swanson has raised a more serious objection. Article I of the By-Laws, whose fifth paragraph Mr. Greeley would amend, devotes its first four paragraphs to a statement of the Purpose of the Association. Therefore the proposed new clause has to be studied in relation to that statement of Purpose. Would the acceptance of the new clause make a circumvention of the Purpose possible? Hardly, for what would be the point of the Association declaring a collective Purpose which we then add may or may not be believed in by its members individually as they prefer? With these questions in mind, Mr. Swanson has filed an amendment to Mr. Greeley's amendment. Mr. Swanson proposes to insert the Gettysburg phrase, "under God," after the phrase "freedom of belief," thus making the new clause harmonious with the phraseology of the Purpose.

In considering this matter, we must not overlook a sentence in Article II of the By-Laws. It is there stated that membership in the Association shall be open to those who express "their approval of or general sympathy with the Purpose." In view of this statement regarding qualifications for membership, it would seem that even if

Mr. Greeley's amendment were accepted, its provision would be ineffective. The door would still not be declared open to those who might not believe in the Purpose.

The proposed amendment does not have our support. If anyone wants to open the door of the Association to admit those who are out of sympathy with its present Purpose then he should propose either that the Purpose itself be amended or that the clause regarding admission to membership be amended. The acceptance of the proposed amendment might lead to confusion.

Unitarian Christianity

RICHARD M. STEINER
(Minister, Church of Our Father, Portland, Oregon)

(From a recent sermon)

I belong to that school of Unitarian thought which is exceedingly jealous of our place in the Christian tradition.

Those who share my feeling (and they are many) are, I assure you, jealous with cause. For there are men and women in our denomination who would like to have Unitarianism become something other than Christian. Indeed they say that we already are other than Christian. . . .

Accepting that verdict, they want the whole of the denomination to accept it also, believing that by so doing we would strengthen our sinews, drawing to ourselves all who have rebelled against formal Christianity.

"We shall be," they say, with an eloquence I cannot match, "the creators of a new religion—a religion for the modern age, the modern mind, the religion of free men and free women from pole to pole. We shall synthesize all that is great and good from all the great and good religions of the world. We shall be neither Christians, Jews, Mohammedans, Buddhists nor Shintoists. We shall be Unitarians."

(I hasten to insert, parenthetically, that Unitarians are not alone in the misfortune of having dissensions within their ranks. . . . The divisiveness, which is the peculiar malady of all of Protestantism, has simply taken in our own denomination a more radical twist.)

This church, whatever may be said for the entire denomination, is, and always has been a Unitarian Christian Church.

Unitarian Christians should never hesitate to declare that they, too, belong to "the household of God"; that Unitarian Christianity is built, as other Christian Churches are built, upon "the foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being the chief cornerstone."

Liberal Christianity Calling

PAUL HARMON CHAPMAN
(Minister, Winchester Unitarian Society, Winchester, Mass.)

"The International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom" is, as the name implies, based on the liberal interpretation of Christianity. Those who attended the I. A. R. F. conferences before the recent war are aware of how much the Christian tradition means to religious liberals in Europe.

If there is any doubt as to what is meant by the "liberal Christian tradition," it is very clearly explained in the statement which received the general approval of the Executive Committee of the I. A. R. F. Dr. John Howland Lathrop, its president, gives us this statement in his significant article in the **Christian Register,** announcing the dates for the Congress in Amsterdam in July 19-25, 1949.

The pronouncement defining "the outstanding elements of the Liberal Christian tradition" reads: "Over against the present trends in the Christian churches and in the life of the people towards various kinds of dogmatism and totalitarianism, the message of Liberal Christianity gives a more satisfactory answer to the spiritual and social problems of our day."

The executive committee of the Congress compiled a very definite summary of what it meant by The Liberal Christian Message as: "Life in the spirit of Christ; freedom of conscience and thought; the sanctity of the human personality; struggle for social security and social justice; the equal value before God of all races and classes; the quest for peace and for an international order of justice; the value of permanent monogamic marriage; education in the spirit of democracy." It is indeed "of much interest," as Dr. Lathrop comments, that with "the variety of church traditions and countries" there should be "such unanimity on the essentials of religious liberalism."

Is not the reason for this unanimity the

fact that these church leaders met on the common ground of Liberal Christianity? Is it not because their religious liberalism has as its aim to "promote the interests of pure Christianity?" Is not this a challenge to all liberal Christians to rally to the support of this International Association for Liberal Christianity?

Here is the opportunity for fellowship and cooperation of all Liberal Christians. It is a particular opportunity for Unitarian Christians to work with other liberals who value the Christian traditions of our Unitarian Heritage. Let us establish study groups in our churches, as Dr. Lathrop suggests. Let us begin planning now for delegations from our Unitarian Christian Fellowship to attend this Congress of Liberal Christians!

NOTE: At its recent meeting, the U.C.F. voted to send a delegate to the next meeting of the International Association for Liberal Christianity and Religious Freedom, in Amsterdam, July 19-25, 1949. It is urged that anyone who can attend this next meeting and conference please communicate with Rev. Paul H. Chapman, our Executive Secretary, to make arrangements to represent us.

The Greatest Danger for Liberal Christianity

FRANKLIN ZEIGER
(Unitarian Minister, Retired)

The greatest danger for liberal Christianity is one that is readily overlooked. It is not that we may be poor in positive beliefs, nor that we may become tolerant of things that are inimical to religion or to morality, though these may be real dangers for us. It is rather that we may become merely interested in religion in an **objective**—or if you will, **scientific** sort of way, as if religion were for us in the same category as a problem in physics.

In fact religion can be viewed in this way. For, all in all, it is probably the most interesting subject in our world. But this may prove an unfortunate fact for us in the way we react to it, if we come to regard religion only with aloofness.

This temptation is likely to become especially seductive when one engages in controversy over beliefs or creeds which one feels it his duty to propagate, or to defend against opposing beliefs or errors. Then, in the heat and animosity which are so readily generated, the brotherly love and the Christian spirit which we ought to have toward all men, and which are of the very essence of Christianity, are prone to disappear, at least for the time being—and we forget that love is the greatest thing in the world.

But if one is really to know Christianity, it demands a price; and to many people the price seems too high. According to the best authorities, one cannot really know what Christianity is without "getting religion," or being possessed by it. And the extent and degree of one's knowledge of Christianity is one aspect of the extent and depth of his experience of it in his own life.

For many, however, there seems always to be the temptation to take the dilettante and superficial attitude toward religion, which may easily appear to be the scientific attitude. Its result is to substitute **interest in** for **aquaintance with.** Knowledge of Christianity must be grounded in personal commitment and experience.

Be Not Deceived

RALPH E. KYPER
(Minister, The Second Parish in Saco, Maine)

Among the material recently distributed by the American Unitarian Association is a little folder entitled "Statements of Purpose." It begins with the statement that the A. U. A. was chartered, in 1847, for the "promotion of the interests of moral and religious instruction."

Subtle propaganda this. The purposes of the Association were stated in non-theistic terms. The unsuspecting are thereby led to believe that our denominational founders were "tolerant" of all sorts of theological vagaries. Not at all. The more probable explanation is that the absence of theology is evidence of its being taken for granted. The commonly accepted articles of faith were, as Dr. Chas. E. Park put it in a recent issue of **Our Faith,** "tacit assumptions," and therefore did not need to be reiterated in a purely legal document. Everyone knew, more or less, what "religious instruction" meant, and Christian theism was implied. Little did our "founding fathers"

suspect that a revived Positivism would masquerade as religion, dividing our movement and discrediting it in the eyes of all thoughtfully religious people.

The Humanists' Bedfellows

The Progressive World (325 Mt. Prospect Avenue, Clifton, N. J.) for Sept.-Oct. announces that "several well known Freethinkers and Humanists have joined us as Associate Editors."

More significantly, the same issue gives a full report of the "National Freethinkers-Humanist Convention" held in Chicago on August 7-8, "near Robert G. Ingersoll's anniversary." "For the first time in America," we are told, "Freethought and Humanist societies successfully met to combine. . . ."

A tentative constitution for a federal union was adopted. It was decided that its name will be either "The United Secularists of America," or "The National Freethought Society of America," or "The Federation of Freethinkers." Within the union will be "Humanists, Rationalists, Ethical Culturists, etc." These all belong together, because, it is said, "they have the same basic, liberal, freethinking principles."

The convention's "keynote address" was delivered by one who "was until recently a member of the National Council, Unitarian Laymen's League," and his participation is explained by the parenthesis: "(Unitarianism being based on the free mind principle)." This Unitarian expressed the hope that the new union will establish "rationalist Sunday Schools for teaching freethinkers' children."

Our readers may have never seen the word Unitarian in that context before. Such a use of it is, however, directly in line with the socalled principles of Unitarianism evolved by the Board of Directors of the American Unitarian Association in 1944, and since then extensively promulgated.

One of the positive values of the new freethought-humanist federation is that it offers the Humanists within the A.U.A. fold an opportunity to affiliate with likeminded people as an alternative to associating with those to whom Jesus means far more than Robert G. Ingersoll.

Somewhat paradoxically, Dr. E. C. Broome, minister at Belmont, Mass., is reported in the **Inquirer** as having told a group of ministers in England in September that he felt the future of the Unitarian movement in America lay with "the more aggressive congregations of humanist tendency in the West and South." —E. B.

News of U. C. F.

The Unitarian Christian Fellowship, at its Annual Meeting at the Arlington Street Church, Boston, on December 8, elected Miss Sybil H. Holmes, noted Boston lawyer and former State Senator, as its chairman. Organized to strengthen the faith of Unitarians who recognize the teachings of Jesus as the foundation of the Unitarian Church, the Christain Fellowship welcomes to its membership those who believe in cooperation with the liberal Protestant movement. It adopts for the masthead of its paper, OUR FAITH, the covenant, "In the Love of Truth and the Spirit of Jesus we unite for the Worship of God and the Service of Man."

Mrs. Herbert Lyman of Brookline was elected vice chairman. Rev. Paul H. Chapman of Winchester was elected Executive Secretary, Rev. Clayton B. Hale of Rockland, recording secretary, and Mr. Joseph E. Coulter of Boston, treasurer. To the executive committee were elected Mr. Theodore C. Browne of Winchester, Mr. Marshall Dalton of West Newton, Rev. Rowland Gray-Smith of Hingham, Mrs. William Stanley Parker of Boston, and Mr. Marshall Stone of Newton Center. The Fellowship voted for the appointment by the executive committee of regional vice chairmen. Rev. Harvey Swanson of Lancaster, Pennsylvania, was re-elected editor of OUR FAITH. Rev. Rowland Gray-Smith was re-elected chairman of the Editorial Board.

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Articles suitable for publication in "Our Faith" are welcome from all who wish to use these columns to express Unitarian Christianity.